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Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

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Thursday, 7 May 2009, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Churkin	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Long Zhou
	Costa Rica	Mr. Guillermet
	Croatia	Mr. Vilović
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Shalgham
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Turkey	Mr. İlkin
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Ms. Rice
	Viet Nam	Mr. Bui The Giang

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Ninth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) (S/2009/218)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Ninth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) (S/2009/218)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Lebanon, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Salam (Lebanon) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004).

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Roed-Larsen to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2009/218, which contains the ninth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004).

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, Special Envoy for the implementation of Security Council resolu 1559 (2004). I now give the floor to Mr. Roed-Larse

Mr. Roed-Larsen: I have the honour today present the ninth semi-annual report of the Secret General on the implementation of Security Cou resolution 1559 (2004).

One year ago, Lebanon was taken to the brink civil war and back. The violence that erupted on 7 M 2008 was one of the greatest threats to the foundations of the Lebanese State. A year has pas since the adoption, on 21 May 2008, of the agreem between Lebanese political leaders, brokered by Emir of Qatar at Doha with the support of the Lea of Arab States. Ever since, Lebanon's dome political and security situation has improved marked

Fortunately, the commitments made at Doha h been either implemented or meaningfully acted up Political divisions between the 14 March majority 8 March opposition have not led to paralysis, altho there have been occasional tensions. President Mic Sleiman has worked tirelessly to forge national un The general improvement of the situation in country, combined with reconciliation efforts in region, has created a favourable environment strengthening Lebanon's sovereignty, polit independence and government control throughout country.

In this context, I am glad to report today further strides towards the full implementation of requirements of resolution 1559 (2004).

The momentum created by the summit meet held in Damascus in August 2008 between Preside Bashar Al-Assad and Michel Sleiman has continued bear positive results. On 20 December, the Leban Council of Ministers appointed Michel Khoury Lebanon's first ambassador to Syria. On 22 Decemb Syria's embassy in Beirut became operational. 16 March 2009, the embassy of Lebanon in Damas was inaugurated. On 24 March 2009, Presid Sleiman approved the appointment of Ali Abdel Kar Ali as Syria's first ambassador to Lebanon. 20 April, Michel Khoury arrived in Damascus to ta up his post. This very morning, he presented credentials to President Bashar Al-Assad. With th recent steps, Syria and Lebanon have nearly comple the process leading to the establishment of f diplomatic relations between the two neighbouri countries, in fulfilment of resolution 1680 (2006).

The Secretary-General has maintained his efforts to encourage Syria and Lebanon to achieve the full delineation of their common border. In Doha this past March, Presidents Al-Assad and Sleiman informed the Secretary-General separately that the joint border committee would convene rapidly to start its work on the delineation of the borders, pursuant to the agreement reached in Damascus between the two Presidents on 13 and 14 August 2008. On 23 December 2008, President Sleiman issued a presidential decree naming the Lebanese members of the Lebanese-Syrian border committee tasked with delineating their common border. The United Nations is looking forward to the appointment by Syria of its delegates to the committee. The Secretary-General welcomes the renewed commitment of Syria and Lebanon to make progress on this matter and expects its early materialization. Tangible progress on the demarcation of the border is important and will benefit both countries.

The Secretary-General is glad that relations between the two historically close neighbours have improved significantly and have entered a new phase, particularly with the establishment of diplomatic relations. The Secretary-General has applauded Presidents Al-Assad of Syria and Sleiman of Lebanon for the leadership they have been demonstrating. He welcomes the renewed commitment by the Government of Syria, as conveyed in a letter from the Permanent Representative of Syria to the Secretary-General dated 4 May 2009 (S/2009/227), to preserve the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon, as called for in resolution 1559 (2004). The United Nations is hopeful that all these recent achievements herald a new era of renewed cooperation between the two countries, in mutual respect for their sovereignty and political independence.

During the reporting period, diplomatic efforts in relation to the issue of the Shab'a Farms area have been continuing. A further report on this will be contained in the upcoming report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

Over the past six months, Israel continued to occupy the northern part of Ghajar in violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and relevant Security Council resolutions. The Secretary-General has urged his Israeli interlocutors again over the past few weeks to find an early solution to this matter.

Intrusions into Lebanese airspace by Israeli aircraft have continued in high numbers, in violation of Lebanese sovereignty and Security Council resolutions. The Government of Lebanon continued to protest these overflights, which the Government of Israel claim are carried out for security reasons. The United Nations has repeatedly deplored these violations and called on Israel to cease these overflights.

Over the past few weeks, the Lebanese authorities have arrested a series of individuals on suspicion of spying for Israel. The investigation is ongoing. On 4 May 2009, Prime Minister Siniora publicly addressed the matter and described it as a serious violation of Lebanon's sovereignty. The Prime Minister also indicated that he had requested his Foreign Minister to provide full information about these alleged spy networks to the United Nations. At this stage, the Secretariat has not yet received any official communication from the Government of Lebanon concerning this matter. If these allegations prove to be true, they would constitute indeed a serious violation of Lebanon's sovereignty.

Allow me now to move on to the provision of the resolution calling for the disarming and disbanding of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. The disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias is vital for the complete consolidation of Lebanon as a sovereign and democratic State. Over the reporting period, there has been no tangible progress towards the disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, as called for by the Taif Accords and resolution 1559 (2004).

The threat that armed groups and militias pose to the sovereignty and stability of the Lebanese State cannot be overstated, as the events in May 2008 demonstrated. It creates an atmosphere of intimidation in the context of the upcoming parliamentary elections. It also undermines the stability of the region and is incompatible with the objectives of resolution 1559 (2004), which aims at strengthening Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence.

There are alarming reports of a large number of arms in Lebanon, held by groups across Lebanon's political spectrum. During the reporting period, Hizbullah's leadership has continued to assert that it has acquired more sophisticated military technology. The United Nations takes those reports seriously, but

does not have the means to independently verify them. In addition, we remain concerned by the porous nature of Lebanon's border with the Syrian Arab Republic and the continuing potential for breaches of the arms embargo. While the most recent deployment of Syrian troops along the northern Lebanese border — in coordination with the Lebanese army — is a positive step, further operational coordination between Syria and Lebanon will be required to enhance border control. In that context, it is noteworthy that the Government of Syria has denied any involvement in any illegal transfer of weapons across its border with Lebanon.

As the Council is aware, the most significant remaining Lebanese militia is the armed component of Hizbullah. In addition, several Palestinian militias operate in the country, inside and outside refugee camps.

We are concerned by security incidents in and around Palestinian camps. Some refugee camps provide safe haven for those who seek to escape the authority of the State. They constitute a reminder of the grave threat that armed groups pose to the stability and sovereignty of Lebanon, underscoring the urgency to disarm them. Security coordination and cooperation between the Lebanese security agencies and the Palestinian factions have improved, and should be further encouraged. More needs to be done to contain violence, which could potentially spill over into surrounding areas.

During the reporting period, the issue of Palestinian arms outside Lebanon's 12 official refugee camps has been discussed again within the National Dialogue. Those military installations are being illegally maintained by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifadah. There are four such military bases located along the Lebanese-Syrian border, which give those militias de facto control of parts of the land border. There is also a fifth such installation, south of Beirut. While Lebanon's 14 key political leaders achieved agreement in the 2006 National Dialogue that those Palestinian armed positions had to be dismantled within six months, no progress has been achieved. At the last session of the National Dialogue, held on 28 April, Lebanese political leaders reiterated the necessity to implement previous decisions by the National Dialogue. The time has come to implement that important decision.

The Secretary-General has called upon the Lebanese authorities to take the necessary measures, consistent with the decisions of the National Dialogue, to dismantle the paramilitary infrastructures outside refugee camps. While he is keenly aware that that matter falls primarily under the responsibility of the Lebanese authorities, he recalls that that the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifadah are both headquartered in Damascus. Therefore, cooperation between the Governments of Syria and Lebanon will be important in addressing this matter in the best interest of regional stability.

Hizbullah continues to maintain a significant paramilitary capacity and infrastructure separate from the State, in violation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). That arsenal is a direct challenge to the sovereignty of the Lebanese State and a threat to regional stability.

Over the past few weeks, there has been a growing concern that Hizbullah has engaged in clandestine and illegal militant activities beyond Lebanese territory. Indeed, on 8 April, the General Prosecutor of Egypt announced that 49 people had been arrested based on information from State security investigations. According to the General Prosecutor, they have allegedly been part of a cell assigned by Hizbullah "to plan and carry out hostile operations on Egyptian soil". On 10 April, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, publicly acknowledged that Egyptian authorities had detained a Hizbullah operative for attempting to provide logistical and military assistance to Gaza-based militants.

On 26 April 2009, I met in Cairo with the President of Egypt and his Foreign Minister. They shared with me preliminary elements of the investigation into the cell and requested that I convey them to the Secretary-General. Pursuant to that visit, the Foreign Minister of Egypt held a telephone conversation with the Secretary-General in which he indicated that the Government of Egypt would keep the United Nations abreast of the results of the ongoing investigation.

In a recent correspondence, the Government of Egypt informed the Secretary-General that, a cell led by a Lebanese member of Hizbullah had been uncovered during 2008. Using a real passport with a false identity, the Hizbullah operative had visited

Egypt over several years, where he recruited members for the network. The Government of Egypt has shared with the Secretary-General a number of details concerning the plans, resources and actions of the cell, as well as about the materials and devices confiscated.

In a televised speech on 29 April, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, rejected the accusations made by the Egyptian authorities that the organization was aiming to destabilize the country. The Government of Egypt informed the United Nations that the issue was now in the hands of the judiciary authorities of Egypt.

The Secretary-General's report on resolution 1559 (2004) has expressed concern about the statements made by Hizbullah leaders and has condemned such unwarranted interference in the domestic affairs of a Member State. Equally alarming is the fact that Hizbullah has publicly admitted to providing support to Gaza-based militants from Egyptian territory. Those activities exceed Hizbullah's stated national agenda.

The issue of Hizbullah's weapons continues to be central to the political debate in Lebanon. The Secretary-General reiterates his conviction that the disarming and disbanding of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias should take place through an inclusive political dialogue that addresses the political interests of all Lebanese. It should ultimately confirm the sole political and military authority of the Government of Lebanon. Hizbullah should therefore cease any militant activities outside of Lebanon and complete its transformation into a solely Lebanese political party, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Agreement. Regional parties, particularly those that maintain close ties with Hizbullah, must encourage it in the same direction.

We are pleased that the National Dialogue, under the auspices of the President of the Republic, has continued to convene on a quasi-monthly basis to develop a national defence strategy, which should consider ways to enhance the authority of the State. The last session was held on 28 April. In previous sessions, the participants committed themselves, inter alia, to work to guarantee a political and security climate favourable to the peaceful conduct of the Parliamentary election, devoid of violence and with calm electoral rhetoric. It was also agreed that experts would continue to seek to develop a national defence strategy. The next session will convene on 1 June.

The Dialogue touches upon fundamental issues that will affect Lebanon's future and character as a State well beyond the immediate horizon. However, while recognizing the merits of the process, the overall gains of the National Dialogue remain limited at this stage. All Lebanese leaders must approach this process in a spirit of cooperation and exert every effort towards a positive and concrete outcome that formalizes the Government of Lebanon's monopoly over the use of force within Lebanon's boundaries and results in progress towards the disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, consistent with Security Council resolutions and the Taif Agreement. That is also essential for the stability of the region. We remain mindful of the regional ramifications of this issue, and therefore call on all parties, inside and outside of Lebanon, to halt immediately all efforts to transfer and acquire weapons and build para-military capacities outside the authority of the State.

The United Nations would like to pay tribute to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), which play a crucial role in strengthening Lebanon's sovereignty and control over the whole country, thereby promoting stability in Lebanon and beyond. The multiple security responsibilities of the LAF, compounded by the fact that it lacks adequate military equipment, have an impact on its capacity to meet its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions. I therefore call on donor countries to continue to come forward and assist the LAF to improve its logistical and operational capabilities.

In sum, I recall that since the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004) in September 2004, several of its provisions have now been implemented. Presidential elections took place in May 2008. Syria withdrew its troops and military assets from Lebanon in April 2005. Lebanon and Syria have established diplomatic relations and engaged in high-level talks on matters of relevance to Lebanon's sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity, such as the delineation of an international boundary between the two countries, as strongly encouraged by the Security Council in its resolution 1680 (2006).

However, we remain concerned by the occasional security incidents during the reporting period, some of which have led to casualties. These occurrences

highlight the proliferation of weapons and armed groups that continue to operate in Lebanon and whose existence is an ongoing violation of resolution 1559 (2004). These are direct threats to the stability of the country and the region as a whole. The threats posed by the existence of militias outside the control of the State render valid the remaining provisions of resolution 1559 (2004) as they relate to the disarmament of all armed groups and the extension of the Government's control throughout the country. The disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias is a necessary element to the complete consolidation of Lebanon as a sovereign and democratic State.

The upcoming parliamentary elections scheduled for 7 June 2009 will constitute a new milestone in the momentous transition that Lebanon has undertaken since the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004). It is indeed heartening that the Lebanese leaders have committed themselves to free and fair elections void of violence and inflammatory rhetoric. It is indeed essential that the parties continue to adhere to the Doha Accord, including the commitment to refrain from the use of weapons to settle internal political disputes. The leaders of Lebanon must think first and foremost about the future of their country and transcend sectarian and individual interests. On 7 June, the Lebanese people will have a unique opportunity to express their genuine commitment to democracy.

It is a clear imperative that Lebanon preserve its comprehensive political framework of coexistence as set out in the Taif Agreement in an atmosphere free from intimidation.

The Secretary-General calls on all parties and all actors to fully abide by resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). He will continue his efforts for the purpose of achieving full implementation of these and all other relevant Security Council resolutions concerning the restoration of the territorial integrity, full sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Roed-Larsen for his briefing.

I have no more speakers on my list. In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.